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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 DUSHANBE 000801

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR HOAGLAND
NEW DELHI, KATHMANDU, ALMATY PLEASE PASS TO BOUCHER PARTY
STATE FOR SCA/FO, SCA/CEN, EUR/RUS, DRL, INL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 4/29/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [SNAR](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAO](#) [RS](#) [TI](#)

SUBJECT: TAJIKISTAN SCENE-SETTER FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOUCHER AND
NSC SENIOR DIRECTOR MILLARD

CLASSIFIED BY: Richard E. Hoagland, Ambassador, EXEC, Embassy
Dushanbe.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (SBU) Richard and Elisabeth, we are very grateful you are visiting Tajikistan. As you have quickly learned, Central Asia is not the easiest place for the United States to do business, especially since Russia has declared these countries its sphere of influence and is taking all sorts of measures, both overt and covert, to enforce this view. Of the five states in the region, Tajikistan has emerged from the chaos of its civil war in the 1990s and is now one of the two most stable of the five. We firmly believe your visit will advance U.S. goals and objectives. This scene-setter is geared to your full schedule we have proposed for May 8.

¶2. (U) This is not necessarily a traditional scene-setter. We know you read our reporting. Your staffs have fully briefed you for this visit. What we want to do is give you insight and background for the key meetings and events, so that you can make the very best use of them to advance the President's and Secretary's foreign policy for this region.

SIPDIS

PRESIDENT RAHMONOV

¶3. (C) Your most important meeting for the bilateral relationship will be with President Rahmonov. You should know up-front it is likely to be long because he likes to expound at length when he gets wound up - sometimes at considerable length! This is not just the Soviet/Asian custom. It's how he really is. He generally starts reading his prepared talking points, and may appear disinterested. But he quickly gets bored and then, pushing his briefing book aside, speaks from the heart. Though he may sound a bit vehement when he gets on a roll, he is always worth listening to, because he wears his heart on his sleeve, and frequently speaks surprisingly frankly. He may archly refute what you have to say that he doesn't like to hear, for example on elections, should you bring that up. But, to give him credit, you can be sure he will take your message on board, and, likely as not, will implement at least a portion of what you suggest.

¶4. (C) He is likely to want to focus on the importance of Afghanistan to regional stability - he has been a stalwart supporter of President Karzai and his government - and he will certainly bring up hydropower and other regional infrastructure issues. The proposed Dasti Zhum dam and hydroelectric station on the river between Tajikistan and Afghanistan is one of his favorites. He will have just returned from a state visit to Kazakhstan, and you may want to probe him on that. As a grace note, you might want to salute his "open-door" foreign policy, and what we believe are his sincere attempts, sometimes against Russian odds, to protect Tajikistan's sovereignty and independence. Although he really doesn't understand us, he is not at anti-American.

¶5. (SBU) Rahmonov will have a number of advisers with him at the table - at a minimum Foreign Minister Nazarov and Foreign Policy Adviser Rahmatulloyev. But they will not speak unless he consults with them on some obscure detail or another. This will most definitely be a one-man show on their side.

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¶6. (SBU) Your probable separate meeting with Foreign Minister Nazarov, before seeing the President, will essentially be a courtesy call. You will want to summarize your key messages, so that Nazarov can then quickly brief Rahmonov, but you may want to use this meeting to touch briefly on any second-tier issues you might have.

¶7. (SBU) After your meeting with Rahmonov, Tajik and Russian journalists, along with other international stringers, will be staked out. There is simply no way around this. It is standard practice here, and a must-do. Our superb public affairs FSN will manage the journalists (with my guidance), and you can call a halt whenever you like. At a minimum, I'd suggest three or four fairly quick Qs and As. This will be the key opportunity for you to communicate major messages, and will get broader coverage than any other press conference we could set up. You also need to know that the President's press service will have prepared, in advance of your meeting, their press release that gives their spin. It will not be dishonest, but it will not fully reflect the reality of your meeting. That's OK - we can live with that, as we have frequently done in the past. It is not ill-intentioned. It's likely just a hold-over from "central planning."

BORDER SECURITY AND COUNTER-NARCOTICS ASSISTANCE

¶8. (C) Our various military-to-military relationships implemented by our Department of Defense colleagues have been tended assiduously, and are growing in gratifying and sometimes surprisingly positive ways. But now is not the time to trumpet those tender, new relationships. The unasked and unanswered question about an American military facility in Tajikistan hangs over any high-level meeting. We would rather focus on our increasingly well-established border protection and counter-narcotics efforts. Whether or not you actually observe a controlled drug-burn (which would also be a media op, although we understand you may not have time for this), your (we hope)

joint meeting with Drug Control Agency (DCA) Chairman General Rustam Nazarov and Tajik Border Guard (TBG) Chairman General Saidamur Zuhurov, will be a very important part of your visit, because it will send the message throughout the region that we are deadly serious in supporting Tajikistan on these issues. Both generals, in our view, are true Tajik patriots, as clean and honest as they come here, and enormously dedicated and health-wreckingly hard working. A bit of honest hyperbole praising them would not be inappropriate.

¶9. (SBU) The U.S. government has long supported the DCA, for the most part quietly through UNODC, and the relationship continues to expand in more direct and special ways. The DCA is widely considered to nearly meet international standards. Tajikistan interdicts more narcotics than the other Central Asian republics together. Our assistance relationship with the TBG is barely 18 months old, but it is, so far, a true success story. President Rahmonov has quite regularly embarrassed General Zuhurov in cabinet meetings by pointing him out as the model for working with the United States, and by haranguing the other ministers "to get with the program."

¶10. (C) Both these relationships - border control and counter-narcotics - are the foundation for a stronger and more productive relationship in all other areas of our bilateral

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relationship. Because we have proven we are reliable partners in these areas, President Rahmonov is, we feel, a bit more willing to trust us on the enormously more difficult issues like political reform. Although never yet in public, President Rahmonov and his inner circle have increasingly praised the United States for its "objective understanding" of the complex reality in Tajikistan and how to do business here. They are quietly grateful for Washington's increasing attention.

¶11. (C) An interesting footnote: before 9/11, General Zuhurov, when he was first Minister of Security and then Deputy Prime Minister for Security Affairs, was the Tajik point-man for funneling U.S. assistance to the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan. He still keeps a photo of Ahmad Shah Masood on the bookshelves in his private office.

U.S. ASSISTANCE FOR ELECTIONS

¶12. (C) We intend to put together for you an event at the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) that would include political party representatives, respectable and progressive Tajik journalists, members of civil society promoting fair elections, and, we hope, some Tajik government officials. This would not be a head-bangingly boring talking-heads event. We will prevent that. You would control it. You know from Embassy Dushanbe's reporting that IFES has a remarkable initiative underway, supported by DRL, with progressive Tajik government officials, including some very highly placed, who are committed to improving the conduct of the November presidential election. USAID has also funded \$280,000 for election support by National Democratic Institute. Nevertheless, despite their commitment, they are a bit leery that they can ever do enough to satisfy the international (i.e., Western) community.

¶13. (SBU) Your message, we suggest, should be that building democracy is a long and incremental process. We can and will be patient, but we likewise expect incremental progress. There is always something to criticize in the conduct of elections - after all, the OSCE did not give the U.S. 2004 Presidential Election an absolutely clean bill of health! We would never recommend you pull any punches, but this will be an opportunity for a forward-looking, upbeat message about the presidential election.

STUDENTS AND EDUCATION

¶14. (U) We sincerely applaud your commitment to education as a fundamental for building a brighter future. Our intention, if

there is time, is for you to have a brief round-table with English-speaking students, probably at the American Corner.

¶15. (SBU) We caution you may hear some negative platitudes about U.S. foreign policy. This is not necessarily because various entities have gotten to the students and planted questions. It's not because they are knee-jerk anti-American. It really is because the information space in Tajikistan is almost totally dominated by Russia - and I know you are well aware of the multiple twisted versions of reality Russia has been promulgating. If this event occurs, we see it as an opportunity, not as a confrontational challenge. It is vitally important to know that Tajiks are very open to new ideas, and eagerly accept divergent views.

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THE 800-POUND BEAR

¶16. (C) While Iran and China are active in Tajikistan, Russia is the 800-pound bear. We know you are fully apprised of the increasingly negative, domineering role the Kremlin is attempting to impose on Central Asia, and not the least in Tajikistan. Maybe especially in Tajikistan. President Putin threw down the gauntlet during his state visit to Dushanbe in October 2004 and all but declared, through economic accommodations and probably pie-in-the-sky promises of multi-billion-dollar investment in infrastructure, that Tajikistan is Russia's, and that the "little Tajik brother" needs to get with the program. Much of this new "druzhba narodov" (Soviet-style "friendship of the peoples"), is supposed to be implemented through controversial RusAl oligarch Oleg Deripaska.

¶17. (C) Even though Tajikistan was always the most remote and poorest of the Republics of the Soviet Union, Russia's 201st Motorized Rifle Division, now the 201st Russian Military Base, has been here since 1945. The 201st totally mobilized to Afghanistan during the 1980s Soviet-Afghan War. It is now rather a shadow of its former self, but it still projects itself as a formidable player and nearly sole guarantor of stability and security in Tajikistan. A lot of this is hortatory. Russia does not measure up to its rhetoric. When the Russian Border Force withdrew from the Tajik-Afghan border in 2005, it proclaimed it was leaving everything intact and passing the full infrastructure on to the Tajiks. In fact, the departing Russians stole what they could, including the urinals and kitchen sinks, and destroyed much of the rest.

¶18. (C) We know for a fact that Rahmonov is increasingly exasperated with the Russians. However, if he is feeling relatively discreet, you will not hear this directly from him. Although many Tajik officials are pro-Russia and nostalgic for the Soviet past, Rahmonov also has increasingly included in his circle more modern, internationally savvy, sometimes purely technocratic progressives. He orchestrates the chaos as if he were directing Stockhausen rather than the niceties of neo-classical Stravinskiy.

¶19. (C) In the end, this is why, despite all the headline bad news, we still continue to believe Rahmonov, at heart, is a reformer, even if this is slow in practice. That is why your visit is truly important. It is a signal opportunity not to rag on him, but to encourage him further in the right direction. We trust your light touch with tough messages.

¶20. (U) We very much look forward to your visit to advance U.S. foreign policy in Tajikistan, and, thus, in Greater Central Asia.

¶21. (U) Minimize considered.
HOAGLAND